

# The growth of online news media in Ireland and its effect on the newspaper industry

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## **Declaration**

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the program of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

Signed: .....

Dated: .....

## **Abstract**

The introduction of internet has revolutionized the media industry. Researchers have reported a gradual but consistent drift of audiences away from the traditional media. Most newspaper industry go online by creating the online news media platform for its audience and finding means to generate revenue.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examines how competition, advertising revenue and the invention of online news media has affected the newspaper industry in Ireland. Also, how journalist working practices has been affected with the invention of the internet.

Qualitative research methods with a semi- structured interview was used in this dissertation to collate information from five media professionals who work in the newspaper and online news media. The rationale behind choosing this method is to know how the growth of technology has affected the readership of the newspapers, the work environment in the media house, and the liquidation of the newspaper industry in Ireland.

This dissertation reveals that the growth of online news media has made journalism cheap. It has redefined what news is to appeal to the younger generation, created citizen journalism, the web2.0, reduced advertising revenue going into newspaper media and created large scale competition for newspaper media.

In the next 10 to 20 years newspaper media may cease to exist or become a scarce commodity which may be produced fortnightly or monthly and used for relaxation purposes.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to analyse the growth of online news media in Ireland and its effect on newspaper media. Information from the interview in chapter 4 were used to quantify the extent to which the online news media has affected the newspaper industry in Ireland and what the newspaper media can do for continuous survival in the business.

The importance of this study to journalism is that it will serve as an educational material for students who want to know about how bad the newspaper media has been affected in Ireland, and add to the existing research done on this topic. Very few research pieces on this topic have been completed in Ireland, hopefully this research will influence other researchers to fill in arears that have not been sufficiently carried out in this study area.

This research was done because the researcher saw a change in the way news was consumed in Dublin. Over time the level of patronage of newspaper content reduced drastically due to the advent of the internet, giving rise to the establishment and operation of online newspapers. Nowadays people get access to information through their mobile phones and devices thereby creating an adverse effect on newspaper operation.

A qualitative research method was used in answering the research questions of the study. The research instrument used for the study was in-depth interviews which allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely and speak up on the issues relating to the research objectives of the study. The advent of the coronavirus had a big impact on the media sector in general. The population sample used was five experts in the media world who were selected using multi- stage and non-probability sampling technique. The data collected was analysed and presented in a prose form where quotations and semi quotations were used where necessary.

The Newspaper media has contributed greatly to the circulation of information all around the world. According to the Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary 3rd edition (2020) a newspaper is "a regularly printed document consisting of news reports, articles, photographs

and advertisements that are printed on large sheets of paper which are folded together but not permanently joined". According to Ramanujam (2008), "newspapers are dying. It's an inevitable fact that the internet has robbed newspapers of their readers due to the medium's ability to deliver news fast".

With the creation of computer in 1975, "technology has developed tremendously with 57% of the world population using the internet as of 2019 with 5.11 billion unique mobile users in the world today" (Kemp, 2020).

The world is now a global village as predicted by Marshal McLuhan in 1964, as individuals have access to news as soon as it is happening anywhere in the world (Dixon, 2009). The use of the internet has created globalization, which has been able to enhance easy connection of people all around the world. This growth has developed the use of online news media which are the go-to-media for the younger generation.

The internet is also a cultural space which consists of its own norms and rituals. Although, it is a vehicle for different forms of communication and information distribution, it is also a means of storing information (Brian & Gary, 2003).

The online news media, due to the features made available by the internet are able to practise immediate uploads of information irrespective of the time, compared to the newspaper media. Time production of news content are not totally segmented or aligned in the online news media. However, newspaper news media production is produced daily, weekly or monthly depending on the purpose of the concerned media (Flavián & Gurrea, 2008). Online news media has the ability to update stories regularly and interact directly with the audience. All this quality has increased the popularity of online news media, prompting newspaper media to provide online services (Flavián & Gurrea, 2008).

The layout in an online news media is similar to that of the print media. Online news media places only a few sentences of their top stories which may contain some of the 5W's & H's (who, what, why, when, where, and how) in the home page of the website just to attract the attention of the readers. These are represented with different types of videos, audios and pictures that are changed frequently as a story break. This is unlike traditional newspapers which place the most important story on the front page of the paper. The size of the headline

and its placement, the picture used, allocation of space to a story and page number are all determined by the editor (Hashim et al., 2009).

For the past decades, new communication technology has transformed all aspects of communication making it faster, cheaper and easier to access by people all around the globe. Hence, the main focus of the study is bent on examining the growth of online news media in Ireland and its effect on newspaper media.

These technologies have changed the pattern in journalism as the web2.0 and citizen journalism has been created where an ordinary citizen can post what he/she thinks is news, as opposed to the traditional way where the journalist is the source of breaking news.

### **1.1 Research objective**

1. To what extent has competition affected the newspaper industry in Ireland.
2. To what extent has the lack of advert revenue affected the newspaper industry in Ireland.
3. To what extent has the invention of online news media affected the operation of the newspaper media.
4. To what extent has journalist working practices been affected with the invention of the internet.

### **1.2 Research questions**

This study seeks to answer the research questions below.

1. How has competition affected the newspaper industry in Ireland?
2. How has the lack of advert revenue affected the newspaper industry in Ireland?
3. How has the invention of online news media affected the operation of the newspaper media?
4. How have journalist working practices been affected with the invention of the internet.

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

Online news media is the reason why newspaper media is going out of business. Online news media is the reason why newspaper media keeps losing advertising revenue.

## **1.4 Summary**

Major key terms in this study were defined in this chapter as they help to define the purpose of this study. The methodology used in this research was briefly mentioned and the objectives and research questions are clearly stated.

This study will consist of five more chapters, which include:

Chapter 2: This chapter consists of literature review. It examined what experts in the field of communication think about newspaper media and the online news media.

Chapter 3: This chapter explains the methodology chosen for the research work and why it was chosen. This study also discussed the sample population, sampling technique and sample size, research instruments, interviewing, ways data will be presented and analysed, ethical considerations and limitations of the method.

Chapter 4: This chapter of the study presents the finding of the interviews in a more analytical way.

Chapter 5: This chapter is the analysis chapter. This was where the findings of the research were discussed and analysed in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter 6: This is the concluding chapter. This is where all the findings of the research were discussed and the conclusion was derived by the researcher.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Herbert and John (2000), explained that digital journalism shows a change in the way news is consumed by the customers. Digital media can provide rapid, reliable, and accurate coverage of breaking news in a matter of seconds, offering a summary of the story to the public as they happen. Journalists can feed online news websites during an event's growth, keeping consumers up to date in mere seconds. The pace at which an article can be posted has impacted the news quantity in a way that typically doesn't happen in print journalism.

The amount of time being consumed during the newspaper production and circulation process cannot be compared to the manner information is widely circulated by the online news media.

#### **2.1 Online news media**

The online newspaper is a separate newspaper or an online version of a printed paper (Okonofua, 2012). Mathew et al., (2013, p. 232) saw it as 'web newspaper'.

The Irish Times was the first newspaper in Ireland to launch its online version in 1994, which was followed by the Independent and the Examiner in 1997. Online news media during their inception attracted lots of strong audiences but did not enjoy the monopoly on the internet news space as social media came along (O'Sullivan, 2005). In 2003, ireland.com which is also known as the Times had 115,000 users, contrasted with 25,000 for the Examiner. In 2002, ireland.com tried to impose a subscription on its audience which did not turn out to be a success (O'Sullivan, 2005).

The dramatic shift in the news industry today centres around the fact that technology-savvy young people are increasingly likely to turn to the internet as their preferred news source

(Murdoch, 2005).

The use of online news in Ireland has not fluctuated over 5 years with an average of 84% to 83% while the use of print media has dropped to 37% from 50% with 12% of people paying for online news (Reuters, 2019).

The Journal.ie since its inception in 2010 without a print media attached to its name has been able to experience a high level of patronage from people on a daily basis. The above fact was revealed in a survey done by the Broadcasting Authority in Ireland in 2017, as 32% of the respondents revealed that they visited the Journal.ie the previous week before the survey was done (Reuters, 2017). Coming in second is RTE News online (31%), Irish Independent online (30%), and Irish Times online (23%) coming in fourth (Reuters, 2017).

Generally, online news platforms are being used by the people in sourcing relevant information about their immediate environment. According to Marshall McLuhan (1964), 'the content of any medium is always another medium'. Indeed, online news is not different in content from that of print media; the same facts are presented. The only difference between both is the "time scale". Online news is never "put to bed" but is continuously updated.

The different online news sources available to the people include; Blogs, websites, web sources, and subscription to databases. According to the influential media theorist, Clay Shirky, he noted that:

the internet has changed the media equation, replacing consumerism with the power of shared connections. In the age of the internet, no one is a passive consumer anymore because everyone is a media outlet; there are no more consumers because, in a world where an email address constitutes a media channel, we are all producers now.

(Shirky, 2000)

According to Ramanujan he further noted that:

Newspapers are dying. It's an inevitable fact that the internet has made print newspapers largely irrelevant. People think that the internet has only robbed newspapers of their readers due to the medium ability to deliver news faster,

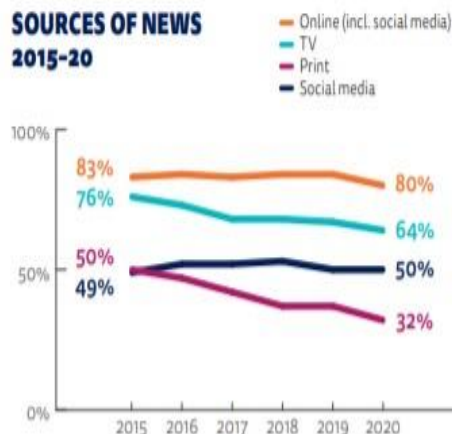
but a new study has found that the internet has been taking advertising dollars from newspapers as well.

(Ramanujan, 2008)

## CHANGING MEDIA

Traditional sources of news such as television and print appear to be in structural decline, though industry data show television audiences increasing sharply during the COVID-19 lockdown. In line with international trends, the use of smartphones has continued to increase over the past six years rising to 69%.

## SOURCES OF NEWS 2015-20



## DEVICES FOR NEWS 2015-20

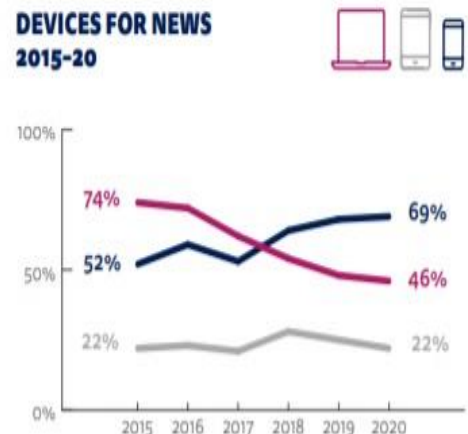


Figure 1 showing the source of news the Irish population prefers. The image is by Reuters (2020)

From the research compiled by Reuters (2020), the population of Ireland is estimated to be 4.8 million people, with 92% of its population as regular internet users. The image above shows how much has changed with how people in Ireland consume news. The graph at the centre of the above figure shows a significant decrease in the way people consume the print media. There has been a fall from 50% to 32% of the use of print media since 2015 to date, with the use of smart phone rising to 69% from 52%. This information was collated before the global Coronavirus pandemic. The use of TV increased with people indoor during the lockdown.

This has significantly changed how news is being received and consumed among the people in Ireland. Online news media are similar to those of newspaper media in terms of the legal boundaries, such as the various laws and ethics governing it for example libel, privacy, and copyright among others (Ogari, 2014).

Online media journalists are being trained to use video and graphics to accompany their news report and writeup. Nevertheless, newspaper publication so far has successfully attempted to include the use of the internet into their operations, whereby journalist are now being trained on how to write stories for both online news media and newspaper media (Boczkowski, 2004).

Online news media would not have been made possible without the introduction of the internet. It is clear that online news media is here to stay and it has so far influenced the operation of newspaper media in the process of newsgathering, writing, editing, dissemination and circulation of information. With the presence of online news media, the adoption of an online platform by major newspaper industry has been able to increase the level of competition between media industries around the world, especially in Ireland. From this assertion, the extent to which competition has affected the newspaper industry must be examined.

## **2.2 Newspaper media**

According to Akinrosaye, (2011) newspaper is “an unbounded, printed publication issued at regular interval which presents information in words, often supplemented with photographs”.

Julius Caesar was the first creator of a newspaper in 59 B.C when he posted upcoming events on whiteboards and displayed them in open places in Rome. The modern newspaper began with the invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg (Althoff, 2007).

The history of the newspaper in Europe can be traced back to the 17th century. Periodic news books and news sheets began to circulate across Europe from 1609 reaching England in 1621 with the publication of the first Coranto, which was translated into English. The following year, sequential news books began to be published (Conboy, 2005, P. 4).

All print media in Ireland experienced a decline in circulation in 2018. The print and digital sales of the Irish Times are down 2% yearly, although the online edition was up 29% as customers switched to the online version of the newspapers in 2018. The Irish Independent has a 6% yearly decline in both online and print versions combined and the Irish Examiner's



print circulation in 2017 being down 8%. The Daily Mail suffered most with its decline at 11% being one of the larger papers (Reuters, 2018).

There has been some existing debate around the future of journalism. Some school of thought believes journalism's future is in the digital world, not newspaper. Other groups of people ascertained that newspapers have existed for hundreds of years, and even though all the news can be read online, newspapers still have plenty of life in them (Rogers, 2019).

Aside from employing the journalists through payrolls, many newspaper organizations also subscribe to news agencies such as the Reuters, Associated press, or Agence France Presse, which hire journalists to discover, accumulate, and report the news, then sell the news stories to various newspapers. This is a way to avoid duplicating the expense of reporting (Palmer 2019).

According to Obe, he sums up the newspaper in the following words:

“At the beginning the newspaper was society’s primary instrument of mass communication and until today the logbook of human affairs than any other means of communication. It was, for a long time, the chief instrument by which people speak their minds on public issues”.

(Obe, 2008. P.25)

Compared with major news media (television, radio, and magazines), the biggest advantage of newspapers is that newspapers can cover more news in more detail than television and radio news broadcasts. Like television and radio, newspapers also report local, national, as well as international news, on a daily basis. In the words of Adekunle (2015) “newspaper stimulates, motivates, inspires, interprets, builds, preserves, excites, satisfies and sometimes disappoints”.

Recently, some newspaper organizations in Ireland laid off some of their staff and claimed redundancy. ‘Mail on Sunday’ and ‘Irish Daily Mail’, owned by the DMG Group, in 2019 announced it is letting go 35 voluntary workers. While the ‘News Corp UK and Ireland’ closed its print edition of the Times and declared redundancy (Reuters, 2019). Loss of advertising

revenue is one of the reasons many newspapers are losing workers and resources (Masters & Skola, 2020).

This did not just happen in Ireland. According to Reuters 'more than 2000 newspaper jobs hit as hundreds of publications across the UK faces COVID-19 cuts. BuzzFeed closing Australia and UK news operations. COVID-19 last straw for some media in SA'.

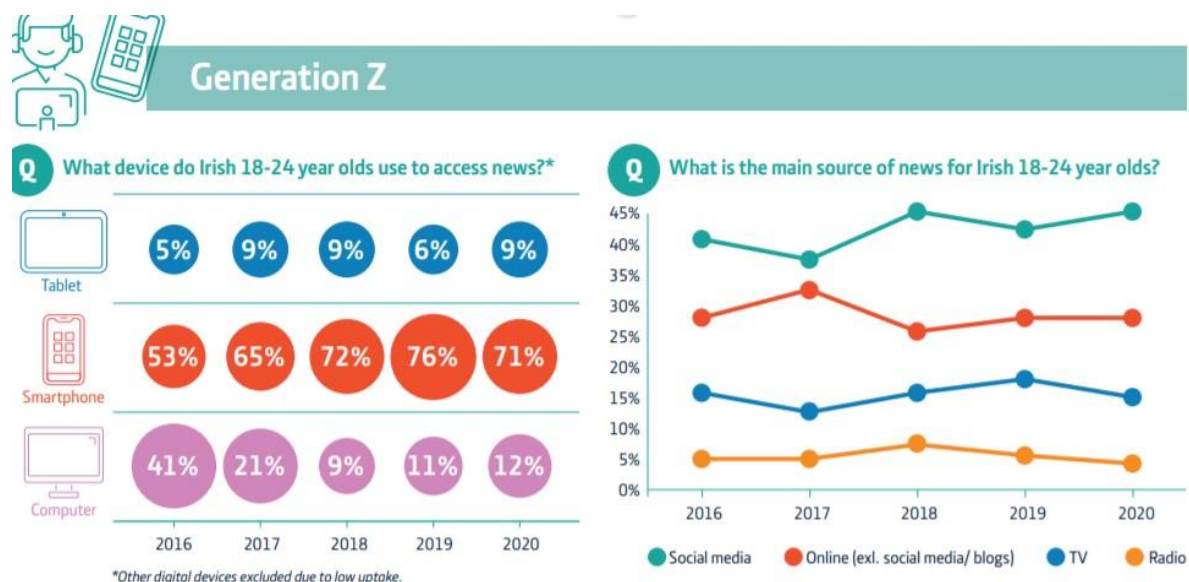


Figure 2 showing statistics of how Generation Z accesses information. Image by BAI (2020) (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland)

The figure above shows how the younger generation aged 18-24 known as the Generation Z accesses information. In 2020, 71% of people between the age of 18-24 use their phone to access news, with the highest in 2018 with 72%. Social media is the main source of information for people in that age group in 2020 followed by online (excluding social media/blogs), television and radio.

The analysis above clearly depicts the future of news and ways the next generation is going to consume it. In the chart, newspaper is not one of the media that the younger generation uses as social media is their main source of information. The implication of this is that it will increase the rate at which fake news is produced. In the year 2020 61% of Irish media consumers are concerned about the consumption of fake news (BAI, 2020). The information in the chart was gathered before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently a company called 'TheLiberal' published an article where they said Croke Park will be used for animal slaughtering during Eid Al Adha in 2020. The company has been called out through social media for publishing fake news as the information was denounced in the Journal.ie. Lots of people also condemn them for this as they do this regularly. This company is an example of publication that will exist because of the existence of fake news on the internet.

The significant increase in the use of paywalls in Ireland has led to 12% of the population paying for online news (Reuters, 2019). A paywall is described as a method by which 'access to online content is restricted via a paid subscription. Digital content providers such as newspapers or magazines and their respective publishing houses use paywalls to monetize their websites' (Paywall, 2019).

### Types of paywall and their differences.

Hard paywall	Soft paywall	Metered paywall	Donation model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All content is fee-based</li> <li>• A subscription is necessary to read articles</li> <li>• As unpopular with advertisers as with users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some content is free while other content is provided as a premium offer</li> <li>• Premium articles can only be read by subscribers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users have free access to a set number of articles per month</li> <li>• To read more than the set amount, readers must pay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The online offering is generally free</li> <li>• Donations are welcome but not obligatory</li> </ul>
Financial Times, The Times	More common in the EU, including the German FAZ and Bild	Washington Post, New York Times	The Guardian

Figure 3 by Paywall (2019) showing the different types of paywalls used by the media industry

The image above explains the different types of paywalls and what each publication uses. An example is the Guardian newspaper which uses a donation model to encourage readers to donate and keep the publication running.

Print newspapers have faced challenges over the decades with the invention of the telegraph, radio, and television, but publishers have always adapted and persevered (Taylor, 2020). The online news media is proving to be a far more dangerous adversary to the traditional newspaper model. Small and large newspapers may have no choice but to give up their traditional methods for a more innovative approach, in the face of such an adversary (Taylor, 2020).

### **2.3 Advertising Revenue**

Most of the top ten newspaper advertisers in the UK have stripped their budgets, the largest Sky network has cut its spending by 20% in the first nine months. The second-ranking BT has so far reduced its national advertising budget by 18%, Asda is down by 47 percent and the once-reliable Tesco is down by 39 percent (Sweeney, 2015).

The amount of advertising revenue that a newspaper can expect to obtain is traditionally dependent on its circulation numbers. Throughout the year, those numbers are tracked, and advertising prices are set based on the outcome. Free Internet, news sources have given newspapers major challenges in struggling to preserve circulation numbers and related advertising revenue

(Masters & Skola, 2020).

High levels of advertising in bigger cities are pushing people to advertise online because it's cheaper. Newspapers are advised to lower their prices as this idea might help with gaining customers. Businesses need affordable advertising, but because of high cost, quite a number of them may not be able to promote themselves (Masters & Skola, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Effect of loss of advertising revenue**

#### **Newspaper Staffing**

Due to the loss of advertising revenue, most jobs have become redundant. In the first half of 2019 20 jobs in the 'Times Ireland' become redundant, affecting the employment of journalists in Ireland. Independent News and Media (INM) and DMG Media Ireland also have cutbacks, whereby 30 people departed both companies (Slattery, 2019).

Journalists working for Microsoft also face redundancy as they were being replaced by robots at work. 12 journalists were sacked, and the reason is the shift away from humans into automated updates of news (Waterson, 2020).

#### **Adaptation**

Newspapers have no choice but to adapt to the loss of advertising revenue. Due to the demand of instant news and information by readers, various newspapers in the industry have been able to create an online edition. A few of these editions are free, while others are provided at a reduced rate or licensed through digital media such as the Nook, Kindle, or iPhone. These formats, therefore, effectively reduce the expense of printing and delivery (Taylor, 2020).

The coronavirus is affecting every industry in the world. In the media sector, the coronavirus poses both opportunities and challenges. Social distancing has maximized the consumption of media content in the homes and the need for timely and trusted information during the crisis (Hall & Li, 2020).

With the global coronavirus pandemic, the pre-existing media industry has been thrown into crisis. Some the newspaper industry might not survive the crisis, due to the collapse of advertising revenue caused by the pandemic affecting the economy of the country. During this period, the online news platforms are also not spared (McMorrow, 2020).

McMorrow revealed how much of advert revenue goes to Facebook and Google, he noted that;

In Ireland alone, I think they account for 81% of online advertising revenue. That gives you an idea of the scale and the scope of the challenges that were already facing media in this country. In the UK, they are predicting that one-third of frontline journalists will lose their jobs over the coming six to nine months.

(McMorrow 2020)

As of April 2020, over 4.57 billion people are yearly active internet users, 59% of the world's population. With the United States, China, and India ranking ahead of all other countries in terms of internet usage (Clement, 2020).

According to Johnson (2020) 'in 2022, the number of monthly active internet users is projected to reach 4.42 million people in Ireland. This in fact will be an increase of 450,000 new users from 3.97 million users in 2015'. Also, Johnson (2020) projected that '4.89 million will be active social network users by 2022 in Ireland with 3.7 million active social network users in 2020'.

The effect the web 2.0 have on print journalism is that it has changed the role and purpose of news. This impact was realized by removing the gatekeeper function of the media (Jason, 2019).

The web 2.0 is unique in that it enhances interactivity and contact with other pre-existing media. This uniqueness has resulted in a vast revolution in journalism and its culture. With self-publishing capacity, the audience and sources take almost equal roles in the process of information production (Jason, 2019). According to Rajendran & Thesinghraj (2014), 'the new media has allowed people to be the transmitter and producers of the event'.

## **2.4 Disruptive Technology**

Disruptive technology is a term created by Clayton M. Christensen in 1997. Disruptive technology, also known as disruptive innovation, is the process by which a new or improved invention is created and becomes popular, which then threatens the existence of an old product. Christensen (1997) explained that "the key to permanently escape the effects of destructive innovation is to continuously innovate within the profession to which one belongs".

The invention of the printing press is such an example of revolutionary technology. By the year 1440, the Gutenberg 's printing press had forced lots of scribes to use the new technology or go out of business with its inception and popularity in Europe. However, in the Ottoman Empire, scribe guilds recognized the printing press as a threat and requested that the latest technology be banned in the province. Many of the scribes were very rich because of the books' inflated prices. The Sultan, fearing not to be supported by the wealthy elite, prohibited the Empire's printing press. Even so, this event did not stop the eventual progression of printed books all through the region and ultimately the printing press ban was stopped, and the handwritten scribe profession ended (Cannon, 2013).

The advent of the internet and then Web 2.0 have been disruptive innovations for print media. The Internet has changed media in even more apparent and direct ways. After all, all from distribution to the consumption of media is now involved somewhere in online technology and activities (Geer, 2018).

According to Global Chair of KPMG's Media and Telecommunications arm Peter Mercieca he said that “disruptive technologies can act as a driver of change, breaking down old processes and ways of doing things”.

'Its effects, however, are pervasive, requiring business to invest differently, plan differently, let go of old assumptions and habits, act boldly and adapt. Indeed, in order to create sustainable new revenue opportunities for their companies, media leaders need to be early movers or fast followers.

(Gary et al., 2017).

To properly understand how media organizations are reacting to the opportunities, and threats, KPMG surveyed within media companies from 16 countries 580 senior executives in a report called 'A call to action Disruptive technologies' barometer: Media sector' this research was analysed by Gary et al., (2017).

Analysis of the research done by Gary et al., (2017) are presented below:

Although the research states that there are risks for companies that cannot respond to disruptive technology in a reasonably timely manner, it also finds that many companies

recognize that disruptive technologies often provide a variety of opportunities to boost performance for their own businesses (Gary et al., 2017).

Competitive pressures stand out in terms of the kinds of negative effect disruptive technologies can have on the companies surveyed. From Gray et al., in 2017, 74% of the interviewees said that because of the use of disruptive technologies new competitors emerged in their industry. 61 % of the respondents noted that disruptive technology has allowed new competitors from other industries to enter their industry, while 44% said that incumbents use disruptive technologies to gain a lead over them.

Examples of these issues are the effect of companies like Google and Facebook on pre-existing media network advertisement revenues, such as television and newspapers. In 2019, Google and Facebook accumulated 40% of total advertising revenue spent in Ireland with 81% going to the online advertising market. Facebook secured 425 million euro in Irish advertising in 2019. Advertisers increased their investment with Google and Facebook with an increase of 7% and 25% respectively in 2019 with a 1.6% increase in 2020 (Slattery, 2020)

The newspaper industry inflicted the pain they are going through now on themselves. Newspaper owners decided to move their audience online by creating news websites and charging people for news forgetting that online media is a detachable medium (Leyden, 2018). Where newspapers sold physical copies whole, information online can be detached and read individually and can also be shared with friends and family at no cost. Leyden, (2018) explained that 'Search engines dismantled newspapers into pages of stand-alone news articles'.

Also, where readers of the newspaper had no choice other than to read all pages of newspaper thereby consuming advertising content, online newsreaders can choose what they want to read from anywhere they want (Leyden, 2018).

## **2.5 The Gutenberg parenthesis**

Many believe that the free flow of information is not new as it brings us back to the old times before the invention of the printing press. Thomas Pettitt's theory explained that the time before the invention of the press was put on pause, he called it 'a break in the normal flow of



human communication'. He called this the Gutenberg Parenthesis. Pettitt also continued to say ' the website is returning humans to a time before the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in which humans were defined by oral traditions: flowing and ephemeral' (Viner, 2013).

The CEO of Twitter, Dick Costolo, has a similar idea when he said that if history was traced back to Ancient Greece, the method of getting information was that people went to the Agora after lunch in the town square to get unfiltered information (Viner, 2013).

Information in the past used to be generated orally, information is attained when people talk about rumours, gossip, conversation, and experiences. The free flow of information today has deeply affected journalism and the media. It has changed the hierarchy of getting information overnight. Where previously people look up to the journalist for information and verification of information, they no longer do that now as they are the creator of information thereby reducing the status of the journalist. Journalists are now seen as equals to ordinary internet users (Viner, 2013).

According to the word of Thomas Pettitt in an interview with Garber (2010), he stated that.

And I suppose the press, and journalism, and newspapers, will have to find their way. They will have to find some way of distinguishing themselves in this. It's now a world of overlapping forms of communication. People will no longer assume that if it's in a newspaper, it's right. Newspapers are spreading urban legends, some of the time. Or at least now we know that they pass on urban legends. And the formal press will need somehow to find a new place in this chaos of communication where you can't decide the level, the status, the value of the message by the form of the message. Print is no longer a guarantee of truth. And speech no longer undermines truth. And so, newspapers, or the press, will need to find some other signals. It's got to find a way through this.

(Garber 2010)

This is happening today where citizen journalism is the source of information. Journalists must reach out to people to get stories to write. The effect of this nowadays is that the free flow of

information has created a platform where information cannot be verified anymore, and most people cannot be accountable for information that they post online. This is where the role of the media/press is important because information released to people (through the press) must have been properly verified to check if it is 100% genuine. If the information is not verified properly before dissemination, the media organization will be held accountable and may be sued for defamation.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **2.6 Technological Determinism Theory**

The term Technology Determinant was invented by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) who was an American economist and sociologist. The technological determinism theory claims that the society in which we live in today is influenced and formed by technological development thereby people in society must adjust and familiarise themselves with new technologies and innovations (Hauer, 2017).

The application of technological determinism theory in the media is attributable to the Canadian mass communication theorist, Marshall McLuhan in 1962 (Marx & Smith, 2011).

The theory states that the way a society thinks, feels, acts, and operates is determined by media technology as people move from one technological era to the other (Marx & Smith, 2011).

Choosing technological determinism theory for this study is based on the fact that the emergence of the internet as a source of information has changed the news reading behaviour of people in society (Viner, 2013). The emergence of the internet gave birth to citizen journalism, this issue has motivated newspapers to have an online presence so that they do not feel left out.

The theory predicts that with every new system of media technology, society will change and adapt to that technology. This theory is relevant to the current study because, the drift of the media audience from the traditional media of mass communication to the new media era, is actually determined by the development of the internet which opens an unprecedented

ability of the audience to interact with the medium and other audience members. No longer are the audience passive receivers, but active creators of media content (Marshall 1962).

## **2.7 Uses and gratification theory**

What mass communication academics today refer to as the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach is known to be a type of media effects research (McQuail, 1994). To effectively analyze the audience, research was done during the early history of communication research to know the gratification that makes an audience interested in a medium and the content or product that pleases their psychological and social needs (Cantril, 1942).

Uses and gratification theory began in 1940s when scholars developed an interest into why people choose the media they use such as listening to the radio, watching television, or reading the newspaper (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994).

During the 1950s and 1960s, researchers listed and worked out many social and psychological variables that could have led to audience media selection (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). The use of the television by children was likened to them wanting to build a bond with their parents and friends. Mass media was also conceptualized to be a means of escape by the audience (Katz & Foulkes, 1962).

“Uses and gratification approach emphasizes positive motivation and active use of the media content that can gratify an individual recipient needs” (Griffin, 2012, p.368)

Blunler and Katz (1974) suggest that “media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. A media user seeks out a media that best fulfils his/her needs”.

Research has proven that people do not just buy papers or read information through the internet just for the sake of doing so. People have enough self-awareness of their media use; interests and motives which is a major drive behind the selection of their media platform and content (Daramola, 2003).

The online news media provides a new and deep field for the exploration of uses and gratification theory in terms of content gratification, process, and social gratification. For uses and gratification to be effective, there must be full awareness, accessibility and patronage of online media outfit and the newspaper outfit (McQuail 1987)

Uses and gratification theory is used in this study because people use online news media, social media, and the internet as an avenue to participate and interact on various issues in the society. The People can also use the internet for more than one function, it can be used as a source of entertainment, seeking and sharing information, relaxation, and social interaction (Musa et al., 2016).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the growth of technology around the world has put a strain on previous media technologies created. The need for existing technology to act better, faster, and effectively has created a world in which people cannot do without technology. In particular, the growth of the internet has made quite a few newspaper media want to survive in the era of technological change and advancement. This has made them move their print media online to secure advertising revenue and hop on the latest trends to remain relevant.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter begins by explaining the research approach adopted and why it was chosen. Research Methods, Rationale for the method chosen, Sampling Technique, Research Instrument, Data presentation and Analysis, Ethical Considerations, and Limitations to the methodology were all analysed in this section. The topic of the research, 'the growth of online news media in Ireland and its effect on the newspaper industry' was selected, after lots of research and reading about the debate around media and technology innovation creating online news media. The research focuses more on the effect of the drastic changes going on in the newspaper industry.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design used for the study is a qualitative research method, in which in-depth interviews were used as an instrument to collect the necessary information. The research method is aimed at capturing the perception of the interviewees, and their experiences behind a subject matter (Burns, 2000, p.11). Qualitative research is used in academic research, where the researcher determines what to study, asks clear and limited questions, gathers quantifiable data from respondents, evaluates these numbers using statistics, and performs the analysis in an impartial, unbiased way (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative research design was used to gather information for deep explorations and vivid descriptions of the current situation facing the newspaper industry and how the growth of online news media in Ireland has affected the newspaper industry. One of the reasons for using this method is to know how technology innovations have created the use of the internet, forcing most of the print newspapers to survive online. The objective of the study is to broaden and strengthen the findings of the analysis and thus add to the research published on the subject.

The qualitative method of research uses raw information that has not been quantified in any way (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 470). 'Qualitative research methods include interviews and observations, but can also include case studies, surveys, historical and document analysis' (Shahrimin, 2001). Amongst the various instruments of qualitative research, the interview is the most widely used method for gathering information. This is because of the relationships formed, and relaxed atmosphere during the collection of data from the interviewees (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Research conducted can either be descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory in nature (Kumar, 2011). The descriptive method defines a situation or problem with stated research questions or hypotheses, which must be already formulated with a clear picture of the research problem to be solved, while explanatory research helps in creating established and clarified facts on why and how there is a relationship between various phenomena and reasons behind certain actions (Kumar, 2011, p.10).

The study which is an exploratory research is focused on answering questions that cannot be attained easily with the aid of other research methods/instruments. More often, exploratory research asks questions that address the various problems around a research study (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2009, p. 62). Exploratory methods help the research have a deeper description and give a clear picture of the study during the process of data collection (Blumberg et al., 2008, p. 200). Wimmer and Dominick (2000, p. 161) noted that surveys are mostly used due to their effect in decision making in organizations, groups, and routines of several institutional bodies.

A research method is basically a preconceived notion of what information the investigator needs to generate to complete the study. Why it is needed? How is it secured? And how to be defined in relation to the research problems.

(Nassar et al., 2008, p. 56).

### **3.2 Rationale for the method chosen**

One of the reasons behind the selection of qualitative research design for this study involves the exploration of ideas and opinions of the interviewees in the study. Also, qualitative

research has the potential to provide vivid descriptions of how respondents perceive an issue and relating all their answers from self-perception (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016).

The study deals with interpreting findings to foster a better understanding of a given problem and to give room for proper follow-up questions during an interview process which is a major advantage of qualitative methods (Blumberg et al., 2008, p. 198).

One of the reasons for using this method is to also to know how the growth of technology has affected the readership of the newspapers, the work environment in the media house, and the liquidation of the newspaper industry in Ireland.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

Sampling technique is a process that helps with the breakdown of the population for the easy distribution of research instruments (Alabi, 2014). The Sampling technique that was used for the study is the multistage technique and non-probability sampling, which was used in the selection of the sample elements. 'Multi-stage sampling is a process of moving from a broad to a narrow sample, using a step by step process' (Ackoff, 1953). Multistage sampling technique will be used to divide the population (Ireland) into smaller groups due to the nature and time frame of the study. The introduction of multistage sampling techniques will make the collection of primary data from geographic locations needed to make the study more efficient.

Instead of choosing a random newspaper industry in Ireland as a means of getting samples for this study, which is expensive and time-consuming. The researcher divides Ireland's newspaper media into sections i.e., online news media, physical print news media, and media business owners. Subsequently organization that falls under that category was selected at random and subdivided based on their region or easy accessibility.

Non-probability sampling was used as a preferred sampling technique for this study because it gives room to the selection of interviewees without any stated representation of the interviewee in the population (Taherdoost, 2016). The type of non-probability sampling that was used is purposive or judgemental sampling as it allows interviewees to be chosen because

the information attained from them cannot be attained from another source in the population (Maxwell, 1996).

Questions to be administered during the interview process must be correctly designed toward the selected group of interviews chosen (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p.94) which is why the purposive sampling method reasonably selects the sample size appropriate for this study. It is very possible for the researcher to be bias in the process of selecting respondents as the researcher depends solely on self-selection and self-perception of an idea when selecting respondents for the study (Lune& Berg, 2017). That is why the researcher will as much as possible select diverse respondent to participate in the research and information will be verified by experts in the field of communication.

However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the use of an online interview will be adopted, which might include the use of websites services like Zoom, WhatsApp, or telephone calls in contacting the intended interviewees for the study.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

The instrument used for data collection in this research was in-depth interviews in which media owners were interviewed through available media platforms as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recordings of the interview were presented and transcribed with quotations where necessary. The interviews were done through virtual or audio means with the aid of Zoom, Skype, and direct telephone calls due to COVID-19 restrictions.

One editor, one managing editor and one general manager was interview for the purpose of the study (Totally Dublin, The Journal.ie and Cork Independent respectively) and also two business owners in a print media were also interviewed (Village Magazine and The Dublin Inquirer).

The analysis of the interview was presented in the study in a prose format, where information asked was presented in sub-headings. Some general questions regarding the interviewee's businesses and their experiences as a journalist were asked. Questions asked were presented in a short and simple format so as not to confuse the interviewees (Creswell, 2012).



The interview questions being drafted ought to go through pilot testing but due to time constraint and the pandemic, the research supervisor gave a thorough check of the questions, in order to help detect any errors or adjustments needed for the questions to be fully developed.

In order to properly qualify the research work, the researcher will be conducting an in-depth interview with a bit of semi-structured interviews (to allow follow up questions) with media professionals preferably media owners. This idea allowed the researcher and the interviewees of this study to express their opinions/views on their own terms, unlike other methods, which only gives room for closed or strict questions and answers patterns. The interviews were recorded and listened to and quotations were used where necessary.

### **3.4.1 Interviewing**

Wilson et al., (2000) described the interview as “an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject” that can be done via telephone, internet or face-to-face. It helps to bring out the hidden information when conducted by an expert, which can be structured (restricted answers), semi-structured (allow open-ended questions) or unstructured (allow free flow of information) (Wilson et al., 2000).

An interview that uses open-ended questions must be carried out in a semi-structured way in order to create a convenient communication atmosphere (Boyce and Neale 2006). That is why the study used open-ended questions where a set of questions were drafted and used during interviews. They were also used because there is little information known about the subject. One of the advantages of an in-depth interview is that it is very detailed when conducted (Babbie 2010). Interviews are different from face to face communication as it aims to discussing major issues and major findings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Interviewees are more comfortable having a conversation with the interviewer without any stress of discomfort (Onabajo, 2010).

The advantage of the interview exercise is that it gives in-depth answers and information that might not be disclosed in other research methods (Peneff, 1988). Interviews will further assist

in giving room for valuable information, and an immediately high response rate. The disadvantages of conducting an interview, is that responses can be prone to bias. The answers given may be sugar coated or exaggerated depending on the individual. Another disadvantage is that interviews must be done with a lot of skills and approved methods, if not the interviewer will not get desired answer from the interviewees. Unlike other methods, an interview can be time consuming ranging from conducting it, recording, listening and re-listening, transcribing and analysing the data before drawing conclusions.

Interview questions must be open-ended and must be followed by some follow up questions in order to further investigate on a particular subject matter. It is being designed to collect unstructured responses for in-depth analysis and discussion.

(McIntosh, 2015, p. 4)

To achieve substantial information from an interview, it must be carried out by an experienced and trained interviewer in order to avoid having responses influenced by the interviewer unknowingly due to the lack of interviewing skills (Bradburn et al., 1979). Individual interviews will be used for this study. Individual interviews, unlike the group interview, help to provide detailed information about the participant and subject. In a situation whereby the discussion is sensitive in nature, the respondent will be free to disclose some hidden or personal experiences relating to the topic being reviewed of which he/she might not feel comfortable to disclose in a group setting (Bradburn et al., 1979, p. 121).

For the study, telephone and web interviews were used. Telephone interviews can be easily done with less cost especially when the respondents are not accessible (Wimmer & Dominck 2000, p. 163). Although, the telephone method might not be a suitable method for data collection, but it can be used in a situation where face to face communication is not possible due to distance or if the respondent is busy, for example media practitioners and top members of the society. Web Interviews have improved over the years due to advancement in technology and introduction of various social media platforms and applications. The internet has provided several options for interviews through emails, Zoom, WhatsApp, or Skype etc., making the method of interview easy and simple (Tejumaiye, 2003, p. 32).

According to (Converse & Schuman, 1974), interviews can be grouped into two major categories; a structured and unstructured interview. Structured interviewing is a situation where an interviewer conducts an interview using pre-established questions, with the responses being recorded. Also, the interviewer is given the authority to decide the tune of the interview and a well-prepared script is being followed in a straight forward manner.

Unstructured interviewing provides a lot of space than other types of interviewing processes, given its qualitative nature (Lofland, 1971). Looking at the traditional setting of an unstructured interview, it can be classified as an open-ended ethnographic (In-depth) interview. While conducting an interview, it is very important for the interviewer to play a neutral role i.e. not injecting one's ideas and thinking into the discussion.

### **3.5 Data Presentation and Analysis**

For data presentation and analysis, the information generated was audio recorded to be transcribed by the researcher. The interpretation of the data collected was analyzed based on the research questions of this study and presented in a well-structured pattern in order to avoid misinterpretation of findings from the interview. Answers attained during the interview was transcribed and written down as a part of the text with quotations. In qualitative data analysis, the deductive method involves procedures in which the researcher prepares a series of standardized questions and then uses them to group and analyze the data (Chapman, 2018). A deductive approach will be used in this study where a set of questions will be asked, and the analysis of such answers will be used as the basis for analyzing the data. This data analysis will determine if more data will be needed or more interviews will be conducted.

A coding system will be designed for easily analysis of the study. A qualitative researcher is tasked with developing a coding system to establish parameters for the unit of analysis. Maxwell (1996, p. 11) noted that "Coding is not what happens before analysis but comes to constitute an important part of the analysis". Coding helps in providing a guide and direction in the process of analyzing the findings of the study. Codes are themes that constitute the major discussion of the interviewees in relation to the research objectives (Maxwell, 1996).

A total of 8 codes were drafted for the study. The codes will be properly explained in chapter 4 of this research. The codes are as follow:

1. Survival and adaptation of newspaper organization in the digital era
2. The decline of print circulation a loss to Irish society
3. Effect of competition on the media
4. Lack of advertising revenue and its effect
5. Hope for the Newspaper Media?
6. Journalist working practices
7. The effect of coronavirus on the media
8. Staffing in a media organization

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations serve as a yardstick for researchers to decide what is right or wrong when conducting research, they do not 100% give the solution to every problem a researcher encounters but serve as a guide to what the right action is to follow (Wiles, 2013, p.13). As this research used interviews, the respondents were informed of the risk involved with answering the questions and their permission was asked before they were being questioned. The researcher gave out consent forms where the rights of the interviewee were spelled out. This act was done to give out detailed information to the interviewee about the nature of the research (Ensign, 2003; Smith, 1992). The interviewees permissions were taken before the commencement of the interviews. Personal information about the respondents and interviewees will not be shared with a third party. An information sheet was provided alongside the consent form, where important information about the research work was clearly stated.

### **3.7 Limitation of Methodology**

One of the major problems encountered was searching for professionals and business owners in the media to interview due to their busy schedule and various activities. Getting enough statistics to back the research up was also a big issue as there was little to no information on the loss of newspaper media in Ireland. What the interviewer was able to find was information on the US and other prominent European countries. The researcher had to use newspaper articles and the regulatory body's statistics to back up the research.

The interviewer was not able to properly assess the behaviour and body language of the interviewee due to the use of telephone interviews which further erased the presence of facial expression and other non-verbal communication signs.

Another limitation is that the interviewer had to interview experts in the field of journalism, who have had years of training being a journalist. Avoiding questions and giving a completely different answer to a question was very easy for the interviewees as they are experts in the field and have had years of training. The interviewees also had a possibility to sugar coat their answers, as the questions asked were directed to their publication which they own or have a high position in.

Boyce & Neale (2006) highlighted some major limitations and pitfalls of in-depth interviews, one of which is "Prone to bias". Some media staff might want to prove that an existing method or operation is effective in order to save their jobs. Information gathered may have been manipulated indirectly, which might be unknown to the researcher. Secondly, an in-depth interview method was time-consuming in terms of the collection of information to the point of analysis of such information. As mentioned, due to the pandemic around the globe, there was a break in communication due to poor network connection, which further affected the passage of information because the interview was done using the web or telephone.

### **3.8 Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative survey method (interview) is to examine the growth of online news media in Ireland and its effect on the newspaper industry. The method goes further to reveal the factors that are responsible for the massive introduction of online news media into communication. The rationale behind the methodology includes; To what extent has competition affected the newspaper industry in Ireland. To what extent has lack of advert revenue affected the newspaper industry in Ireland. To what extent has the invention of online news media affected the operation of the newspaper media. To what extent has journalist working practices been affected with the invention of internet.

This research was conducted in Ireland using business owners and media experts in the newspaper or online news media. The interview designed contains 15 main questions. In this chapter, the rationale behind the chosen research methods is explained, sampling

techniques, research instrument, ethical consideration, and limitations are fully examined. The data analysis and interpretation of the findings will be examined in the next chapter of the study, providing more insight to the main focus and objectives of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter of the study is where the findings are presented. The instrument used for data collection is interview, where by 5 professionals in the media industry were interviewed. The interviewees were chosen from The Village Magazine, The Cork Independent, The Journal.ie, The Dublin Inquirer and Totally Dublin. They are either owners of the publication, managers or editors.

#### **4.1 List of interviewees**

1. Michael Smith- owner/ editor of the Village Magazine.

The Village Magazine is a left-wing Irish current affairs and cultural magazine whose main aim is to check for corruption and inequalities in the society and report on them monthly. The publication has mostly freelance journalists because it cannot afford to have full time staff. The editor for the magazine is Michael Smith who has been doing the job for 12 years and he is now the owner of the publication. The magazine has 10 issues a year.

2. Michael McDermott- editor of Totally Dublin

Totally Dublin is a Dublin based publication with a circulation of 50,000 copies distributed around Dublin. The publication only has one full time employee, some part-time staff and contributors. The editor has been Michael McDermott for the past three years. The Magazine has an online presence that has been thriving, they have food and drink section, events, fashion, arts and culture etc.

3. Sam Trantum- founder of Dublin Inquirer

Dublin Inquirer is a Dublin based publication which was founded in 2015 by Lois Kapila and Sam Trantum, with Stephanie Costello as an editor. They have two city reporters by the names of Donal Corrigan and Laoise Neylon.

The Dublin Inquirer is a local newspaper which covers information basically in the Dublin City Council area and Dublin City Council itself, such as the local government. The publication also

focuses on housing, homelessness and transport and also covers a bit of the culture. Recently they got an expert to write every week about the immigration system. The newspaper is a subscription-based publication.

4. Jarlath Freeney- Managing Director of the Cork independent.

Cork Independent is a Cork based publication founded in 2005. The publication was previously published using the masthead 'Inside Cork' which was later changed to Cork Independent in 2007. The print publication had a circulation of 40,000 newspapers, but with the pandemic the circulation reduced to 30,000. The free publication has been managed by Jarlath Freeney for 15 years. The publication is produced weekly and it covers style and beauty, lifestyle, sports, and motors etc.

5. Susan Daly – Managing editor of The Journal Media

The Jorنال.ie was founded in 2010. It is the first only online news source in Ireland with over 770,000 visitors daily. They have 80 staff in total and 25 staff in the Journal.ie section. Susan Daly who was the editor of the Journal.ie until last year, is now the general manager for The Journal Media (which comprises of The42, Fora and Noteworthy). The online news media covers content such as storytelling, sports, business, homelessness, politics, international, entertainment etc. The Journal media produces a print publication once a year where all the stories for the year are published in the pages of the publication. This is another source of revenue for the organization.

## **4.2 Presentation of Findings.**

### **4.2.1 Survival and adaptation of newspaper organization in the digital era**

From the interview it can be analysed that some interviewees believe that lowering cost of production or making sure that the online version of their publication uses a hard paywall will go a long way in sustaining the newspaper media.

Mr. Tranum said that to save print media the newspaper organization will have to reform the value they place on the stories they put out to the public. He suggested that since almost all print platforms have an online news platform, they should either 'put their digital product via the hard paywall' where consumers can't read any of it at all, unless they subscribe, or 'get rid of the digital version altogether'.



‘As long as you're doing original content that nobody else than you know does, your readers can't find for free, somewhere else online, then if you create just that product people will want it, and buy the print edition of that paper’ said Mr. Trantum.

Mr. Freeney thinks the survival of newspaper is possible if the publications can think about ‘having a low-cost operations’ and giving the best content they have. ‘It's that simple because printing is expensive, so you'll have to be careful that you keep it low cost so that you get very efficient systems’ he said.

Mr. McDermott said that there's no point saying that technology is bad or that there aren't real/positive things that are emerging as a result of technology. He wouldn't have known what was happening with the new wave of Black Lives Matters without the use of social media and the internet.

He made reference to 10 years ago when people said that books will go into extinction; ‘it's still functioning today’. The print media in Ireland may also turn out that way, as people will be reading newspapers just for fun and a time away from the screen and for total relaxation which he called ‘switching off your online brain’.

According to Mr. McDermott:

“Having print newspaper, it's like a book, but I think printers will adapt. I don't think it will be around for a lot of obvious reasons in 20, in 10 years’ time, I think it will be something that will be a lot more coffee table cherished. You'll subscribe to something you look forward to, you can read it on the train or on the beach, or you'll take it on holidays”.

#### **4.2.2 The decline of print circulation a loss to Irish society**

The response given by the interviewees when asked if the decline of newspaper is a loss to Irish society differed. As some agreed it's a loss to good journalism, some said it didn't matter as long as there is good journalism.

Mr. Smith during the interview gave his opinion by saying:

“Yes, it is. I think serious minded long form journalism is lacking to the point that I think lots of people who should be reading more serious material get distracted into reading trivia, short form materials and gossip and non-idea-based material online”

Mr. Freeney gave his opinion by saying if a newspaper prints good and unique content that cannot be picked up anywhere else, there is a high chance of that publication will be around for a longer time. ‘The risk of extinction is more for national newspapers’ because their content can be picked up anywhere as opposed to a local newspaper whose content is rarely seen in a national newspaper.

Mr. Tranum during his interview gave a completely different answer when asked this question he said: ‘I don't think it matters what medium people read journalism in and as long as it's good quality journalism’

When asked this question Mr. McDermott said he wasn't sure as what people use ‘print for is different now’. He said people who are his parent's age will still use the print media, but the younger generation may have a big problem using it.

He likened the importance of print to ‘looking at a photograph in a gallery’ as it is a much more tangibly enjoyable process than looking at a photograph on a camera. He acknowledged that he may be in the minority saying that, but he believes that most people appreciate the beauty of something that allows the brain to function in a different way.

Ms. Daly also attested to the fact that newspaper circulations are dropping, ‘it is not that newspapers are not doing good journalism, it's just that the way people consume news is different from 10 years ago. The younger generation would not buy a newspaper. It doesn't mean that they are not interested in news’ they are getting it online and on their mobile devices. That is why the Journal.ie creates its product mainly for mobile phone users.

She also continued to say that it's not like the newspaper publication weren't aware of the change, but it is ‘difficult for them to take resources out of publishing a newspaper which is a very expensive job from the cost of paper to printing facilities compared to any other media platform’.

#### **4.2.3 Effect of competition on the media**

The media organizations have faced one form of competition or the other, but they all have a major competitor which is the technological giant who they have to compete against directly or indirectly.

Mr. Tranum said:

‘I guess we set up Dublin Inquirer because we thought that there wasn't anyone doing quite what we wanted to do. I think that's still true that the Dublin Inquirer doesn't feel like anyone is competing directly for the same space because we are doing something slightly different’.

Mr. Freeney replied a bit differently, he said that business and advertisers prefer to go to the big national papers to have their product advertised thereby neglecting their own local newspaper. The newspaper was only able to generate 1% of its revenue online and is planning to at least increase the revenue it gets by 5% next year.

Competition affects The Journal.ie and Cork Independent similarly as they both said that they must compete with companies such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Yahoo etc as those companies have ‘the machinery to grab advertising revenue’ said Mr. Freeney. Ms. Daly also said the Journal.ie has had to compete with other big national newspapers, but ‘on a small scale’.

Mr. Smith explained that competition has not affected them that much as the company is a ‘political and left-wing publication’. Not much of the people do what they do. The publication hasn’t really had to struggle because of competition but only from ‘Google and Facebook’.

According to Mr. Smith

‘We don't really have competition the only competition we would have is Phoenix magazine, but it's a totally different sort of a product. It's not very serious. It's typically a product which produces shorter pieces whereas we do much longer’.

Ms. Daly also said online advertising is majorly taken by the larger 'online companies like Facebook and Google.' Media content is often being copied by Facebook and Google without any form of remittance or payment. Although, The Journal Media competes with other national media, the larger competition is the big companies.

#### **4.2.4 Lack of advertising revenue and its effect**

It was analysed that all the media organization have lost advertising revenue, some more than the others, and the loss has caused some organization to lose some staff or reduce productivity.

The Cork Independent has lost 70% of its revenue in the past few months due to the pandemic. This was revealed by Mr. Freeney during the interview. The Cork independent also makes money the traditional way by selling advertising space. They print for free weekly on Thursdays. In their print copy they have two sections. One section is for, reader content, i.e. content for the public and the readers while the second section is for advertising.

The Journal.ie makes 90% of its revenue through online advertising. 'The Journal.ie lost 60% of its revenue in the quarter of this year' explained Ms. Daly. The Journal Media also makes revenue by selling advertising online. 'Noteworthy' is the only platform of the journal that is not funded by revenue. It is funded by contributors and customers.

The lack of advertising revenue has caused journalist to lose their jobs in the newspaper media. Ms. Daly attested to this when she said that throughout her career especially during an election she has seen 'newspaper journalists move to becoming advisers, PR people and communication people' for politicians who are contesting for elections.

The Village magazine has always found it very difficult to generate advertising revenue as they have had to struggle with getting businesses to advertise on their platforms and this is due 'to Facebook and Google taking most of the advert revenue' said Mr. Smith. He revealed that at the 'boom' of the company the organization made a lot of advertising revenue but due to the tanking of the economy in 2008 the money stopped flowing in. The Magazine makes revenue by selling the issue once a month for 3.95 euro.

Advertising revenue lost by Dublin Inquirer was 10% of its total revenue. This was the total amount of advert revenue coming in as the publication is subscription funded. The Dublin

Inquirer makes revenue by introducing paywall to its online media page for 5 euro and it also allows its customers to have a print subscription that delivers their copies to their homes for 8 euro. They do not generate revenue by selling advertising.

Mr. Trantum continued further by saying:

‘We think that means that we can focus on what our readers want rather than what the advertisers want. Advertisers were saying things like, can you just speak less gloomy? Can you just write positive things about our business? And we didn't think that really serves the reader or the advertisers.’

Mr. McDermott doesn't know how much his organization has lost over the years on advertising. Revenues is made through advertising sales very old fashioned, selling to pubs, to restaurants to bars, to brands, and museums.

What he does know is that, ‘What we would have charged for print advertising 5 or 10 years ago is so much more than it would have been now. Nowadays big brands have gone towards the influencer market where they want to have algorithms and they want to have statistics. It's a monitoring, and far less emotional, because print is more emotional and it's a little bit vaguer about numbers, but advertisers now want to drill into it. They want to know the value of every cent spent, and that's of course their prerogative’ said Mr. McDermott.

Out of 5 media organisations interviewed only two organization charged for their content while the remaining three gave their content out for free.

A copy of the village magazine cost 3.95 euro for an issue. The publication has 10 issues every year. Totally Dublin is a free publication because the organization make revenue from advertising sales. Mr. Trantum who is one of the co-founders of the Dublin Inquirer uses paywall for his publication. An online subscription costs 5 euro, but if the customer wants the print copy which is always delivered to the home, they will have to pay 8 euro. The Cork Independent is also a free publication that generates revenue from selling advertising space

in the newspaper. The Journal.ie is a free product online. But the Noteworthy website encourages consumers to contribute to a story they want light shed on it.

This analysis shows that most news media give out their product out for free while some of them charge for the information they give out.

#### **4.2.5 Hope for the Newspaper Media?**

The answer from this question reveals that in the nearest future newspaper media may not exist anymore especially those who depend on print sales to survive.

Mr. Smith thinks that it's going to be difficult for newspaper to recover advertising and it will not recover at the scale that it can sustain production. 'I think it's going to be difficult for newspapers, until they become better at what they do and be more scintillating.' Said Mr. Smith. He continued by saying that newspapers have to stop being boring and pursue the things that they're best at.

Mr. McDermott editor of Totally Dublin thinks differently as he disagrees, he said; 'No, I think some things will survive and some things will disappear'. His big concern is that the things people see as less important or less sexy will disappear such as local newspapers.

"And I think people may not cover local news stories anymore. It's all cool to be reporting on the big murder trial or the big sports story that happened on a national level. But will there be anybody interested in reporting on the local trial and the local sport stories? I think there's a big concern that all the regional coverage will slowly disappear because it won't be viable. And it won't be sexy to cover. And I think there's a big danger to democracy in the long term because if you don't know what's happening at a grassroots level, you're going to start missing out on the bigger picture because that's where things happen. As for daily newspapers, I don't think they will have money either. I think we'll have weekend's newspapers said Mr. McDermott.

Mr. Trantum also thinks print editions will either 'disappear or be very rare'. He also continued to say that journalism is important, and thinks they play a pretty 'important role in public life and democracy', in entertainment and people connecting with the communities in all sorts of

ways. 'But I don't think there's any reason, that it's better to play that role in print than it is on the radio or however you want to do it' he said.

'Just be careful not to fall into the trap, that it is over for newspaper media. Even among ourselves we don't talk like that anymore' said Ms. Daly during the interview. This was said to establish the fact that newspaper publication may still exist in the future.

Mr. Freeney also agreed with the other interviewees saying that some newspaper media will never recover, and most will die off especially those who depend on newspaper sales to make revenue. He made references to COVID- 19 where most people who buy and read papers are the people above 40 and the older. The elderly who are the main buyers of newspapers have been told by the Irish government to stay at home and not go out thereby causing a major loss to such newspaper company.

Ms. Daly also mentioned the newspapers in 'danger' are the ones who sell print copies of newspaper to survive. Ms. Daly said the most important thing is giving people good journalism regardless of the medium. 'It's in the interest of the public that we provide good journalism' she said.

#### **4.2.6 Journalist working practices**

Analysis on if journalist working practices have been affected by the advent of online news media revealed that the invention of the internet has affected journalist working practices, as it has made them lazy by getting information online, increased reporting of fake news and encouraged the stealing of other people's work.

Online media has placed a lot more demands on journalists said Mr. McDermott. 'Originally journalists were assessed based on their CV and how good a writer they are, but now the criteria are on how popular they are, how many people listen to them and if they almost have their own TV show. All which never existed 10 to 20 years ago'.

He made reference to cheap journalism when he said; 'Good journalism requires money I think every opinion is cheap. Everybody can have an opinion, but actually researching and sticking to a story and spending time and travelling is real journalism' said Mr. McDermott.

Mr. Trantum in his interview believed that journalist's working practices may not be what they were years ago but the invention of online news media has allowed journalists have access to lots of stories from different countries and encourage them to do more good journalism which may also make them copy other journalists work and 'posing it as theirs'.

Mr. Freeney believed that the inception of the internet that brought about online news media has affected the journalist in many ways. He pointed out that lots of journalists have lost their jobs or their organization has had to cut back on their salaries because of the creation of the internet.

Ms. Daly disagrees with the statement that the growth of online news media has affected journalist working practices. She continued further by saying 'it is really in the interest of the public that we focus on getting good journalism on whichever platform people are going for'.

To express her level of support for the online news media she said 'the only media with a fact checking unit in Ireland that is verified ever year is the Journal.ie'

'We've had four years of fact checking experience in Ireland, which no other publication has done in years. I will like to see any other publication who has done this' she also said.

She later said the advent of online and social media has affected information because people are getting their information from different sources, and they can't be told what medium to choose, but it's the responsibility of the news media to serve as a platform for genuine and correct information.

Two major bad practices commonly done by newspaper or online news publication according to Ms. Daly are to 'clickbait' audiences and have bad fact checking skills. The audience will be disappointed when this happens and may no longer read from that media.

Mr. Freeney who is the Managing Director of the Cork Independent was asked how the online news media affects the newspaper media his reply was:

'I think that obviously with online, you are looking at just another media source being available because everybody has a phone, they gravitate towards just using the phone to get information' he said.



With national newspapers, customers have access to all the accumulated stories on their website which can be accessed anywhere at any time by the consumers giving them the advantage of convenience. Whereas, to read newspaper the printed copy has to be bought and it cannot be read anywhere or everywhere. Which is why the younger generation will choose convenience/ fun over anything else.

#### **4.2.7 The effect of corona virus on the media**

The effect of corona virus was significant in some companies, while in others it had a partial effect. The pandemic has affected productivity one way or the other in media organizations.

‘COVID-19 shut us down completely’ said Mr. McDermott. The Magazine derives its revenue by selling adverts the old fashion way by going into pubs, restaurants and businesses to sell advert space in the paper. Since the virus shut everything down there was no way for the magazine to sell pages of their paper to get revenue. There was no money, which made it impossible to produce content because they will ‘run at a loss’, and it will also be waste of money as there is no means to distribute the content to their consumers.

Mr. Tranum said the corona virus affected the company through sales of the physical paper as they sold some of their papers through a dozen coffee shops or book shops across the city which are now closed. ‘We lost that revenue, but that wasn't very much most of ours as subscriptions are through the post’.

The Dublin Inquirer also has a policy of trying to make their reporters go around the city and meet people in person for interviews, and also ‘see the places and things that they are writing about and not just spend so much time in office and getting recording or materials from the internet or Twitter’ said Mr. Tranum. This was a big part of their journalism model. It has ended because of COVID-19, all of their staff were working ‘remotely’ which has made writing harder for them. Also, it has disturbed the type of journalism that the founders always wanted them to do. ‘The number of articles they were able to publish also went down and the stress on them went up’ continued Mr. Tranum

COVID-19 terribly affected the Cork Independent as they lost 70% of their advertising revenue. The team which usually work in the office are now working remotely from home

making reporting very hard and difficult for them, as they had to figure out how to still produce and make their technology work. Although they still manage to print every week during the pandemic, they couldn't afford to pay their staff. The staff had to apply for the pandemic payment from the government to be able to work for free said Mr. Freeney.

Due to the effect of COVID-19 For a segment of the Journal media closed rendering 5 people's job redundant. Everyone in the company had a pay cut and the company is trying as much as possible to stay afloat and keep producing. 60% of advertising revenue was lost in the first quarter of the year at the Journal.ie

The corona virus hasn't affected the company financially since it has always been struggling before the corona virus came. 'COVID-19 has only stopped production of the print product for a while' said Mr. Smith.

#### **4.2.8 Staffing in a media organization**

In response to how many staff the respondents have in their organization; four out of five organizations have few staff as the organization cannot afford to employ lots of people.

The journal.ie has a team of 25 staff and 80 full time staff all together in The Journal Media. Some of the staff are subordinate staff like development staff, constructions, management, commercial team for copyright materials etc.

The Cork Independent has 14 staff. Nine full time and five part time staff that are directly employed and, everybody else are subcontractors like the designers, distributors and delivery people.

The Dublin Inquirer has three full time staff, one editor, two reporters, and three regular freelancers who write articles every week. The publication also has a wider circle of occasional freelancers, columnist and reviewers.

Mr. McDermott who is the editor of Totally Dublin said, he is the only full-time staff of the company and they have an online editor. The publisher is in Sweden, the designer is in Berlin, they also have one salesperson and contributors who are all part time staff. The company cannot afford to pay all the staff full time.

According to Mr. Smith he is the only full-time staff the organization has as they operate on a 'shoestring'. The others are freelancers as the magazine doesn't have the fund to employ full time staff.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis of findings**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter will answer the research question that the study presented in the first chapter by analysing the response of the interviewees.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) characterize data analysis as a complicated, unclear, and time-consuming process, but an innovative and interesting process in which a set of collected data is placed in order. Data analysis is the summarization, organization, and categorization of raw information in a presentable way. Research analysis helps to find themes and pattern in raw information to easily identify the link between them, which can be done in a top-down (from most important to least important) or bottom-up (least important to most important) way. For the purpose of this study, the analysis will be done from the most important information to the least important.

To restate the research question for the analysis of information. This study answers the questions in this chapter

1. How has competition affected the newspaper industry in Ireland?
2. How has lack of advert revenue affected the newspaper industry in Ireland?
3. How has the invention of online news media affected the operation of the newspaper media?
4. How have journalist working practices been affected with the invention of internet.

Competition has affected the operations of the media sector especially the newspaper media. This conclusion was reached after 4 interviewees who work in a newspaper organization said competition has affected them one way or the other. The local newspapers had to compete with the national newspapers and the technological giants. While the national newspapers had to compete with other national newspapers and the likes of Google and Facebook.

The statement made by McMorro (2020) in the second chapter where he said that media organization had to suffer as a result of Facebook and Google taking almost all the online

advertising revenue was attested to by Susan Daly, Mr. Smith and Mr. Freeney in their interviews as they had to compete vigorously with those companies. The Cork Independent only made 1% of its revenue online as a result of stiff competition online.

The lack of advertising revenue has affected the media industry in general. Media organizations have tried to stay afloat by devising lots of methods to keep existing. Ramanujan (2008) in the second chapter spoke about what effect the lack of advertising revenue can have on a newspaper organization. Lack of advertising revenue can lead to the publication not being able to sustain itself and going out of business in the process. This statement was confirmed by all 5 interviewees as most of them have to struggle to keep float these days. The village magazine can only afford to have one full time staff because of the lack of advertising revenue.

The Global pandemic is also a big cause of loss of advertising revenue to the media sector in the last few months as lots of businesses had to shut down and everyone had to stay in, to prevent the spread of corona virus. Four out of five organization were affected badly due to the pandemic as one publication lost up to 70% of its revenue during the pandemic. 'The Fora' a segment of the Journal Media had to close due to the coronavirus as they ran out of money to maintain the publication. 5 jobs became redundant and all the staff had to take a pay cut due to the loss of advert revenue.

In order to reduce cost, some staff of the organization have more than one role assigned to them. Mr. Smith the editor of the village magazine does the online and print editing of his publication. While some media organizations can only employ part time staff to stay in business and only a few has a separate online and print editor.

The extent to which the invention of online news media has affected the operations of the newspaper media was measured by the response given by the interviewees. The invention of the online news media has made journalism cheaper, created monopoly of information and made some journalists experience pay cuts and job losses.

The reason for this according to Mr. Trantum of the Dublin Inquirer is that, with the invention of the internet all the newspapers decided to put their news content online for free. 'That was a terrible decision and the newspaper industry has been suffering since then. In my entire career, every newsroom I've worked in has been cutting staff. So, print circulations have been

declining for basically my entire lifetime and I don't think that will change because newspapers seem unwilling to change that.' He supported his point by saying although some of the newspaper media are putting out paywalls, but the subscription rates for their digital editions 'are generally much cheaper than that of their printed edition. So, they're still undercutting their print products' thereby still not making great profit.

The invention of the online news media has made almost all newspaper organization go online. They believed that going online would create an avenue to get advertising revenue online and gain more recognition from the younger generation who would not pick up a print copy of their work. The younger generation wants convenience which the mobile phones provide, that is why newspaper media are going online to provide that convenience to their young users.

The creation of online news media has created monopoly of information in the newspaper media. Since most newspaper organizations have had to cut back on staff to still remain relevant in that society, the information they produce is created by very few journalists. Journalists will write on stories that are of interests and comfortable to them, neglecting other beats that are not favourable or of interest to them. This habit will lead to the production of the same group of content by the journalist, ignoring other sectors that may be important to the society at a point in time.

Mr. Tranum expressed his own opinion by saying 'when the finances aren't as good, you can't hire as many reporters or you can't keep people long enough to get a really in depth, knowledge of their beat and this turns the media into a downward spiral where the journalism gets poorer'.

The creation of online news media has increased the rate of fake news. Personal bloggers and social media influencers can easily go to online news websites and copy pieces of information to put on their personal media, but since they want to drive traffic to their website they may exaggerate or change the information.

A lot of online news websites have social media platforms which they use to promote their articles. In the process of readers sharing that information with friends and family, distortion may occur or the intended meaning may change completely creating fake news.

The invention of technology which has led to the creation of the internet has affected journalist working practices. It has increased fake news, clickbait, copying of other people's work, redefining what news means (just to appease the younger generation), and made journalism cheap.

Clickbait is also a mechanism online news media uses to get customers to read their stories. They use catchy headlines that attract the attention of the reader to click and read the story. Most of the time the consumers are left disappointed as the headline and main body of text may have no correlation whatsoever. The 'catchy' headline is not what really happened in the story.

The creation of online news media has its advantages as it allows journalists to connect with things happening all around the world. The effect of this is that it also makes journalist lazy and prone to copy another journalist's work and 'pose' it as theirs, as Mr. Tranum stated. It also creates an avenue for fake news to be passed as genuine information. An online news media called The Liberal has been called out severally for being the transmitter of fake and misleading information.

The internet did not just affect journalistic working practices, it also created pay cuts and losses of jobs in the media. With the creation of online news media, lots of print media had to cut staff to keep afloat revealed Mr. Freeney. With the creation of online news media, a person can do more than three people's job, a person can be the editor, journalist, reporter and social media account manager all at the same time. The implication of this is jobs keep getting cut, at the same time recruitment is not happening thereby, increasing the rate of unemployment in the country.

To attract the Generation Z, what news is, had to be redefined by the online news media to get them to read on their website. Journalists had to write more gossip and entertainment in a flexible and short form because it is what attracts the younger generation to the internet. This is opposed to the traditional strict long form of journalism about politics and democracy that is essential for the growth of the society.

The analysis in this chapter shows that there have been one or two effects of the growth of online news media on the newspaper media. The initial effect the online news media had on print is that, it made journalism cheap as information was initially put on the internet for free.

Nowadays people don't want to pay for information they can always get for free, which is the reason why online news media are finding it hard to get subscriptions.

The Journal Media does not have a separate social media editor, who puts up content on its social media page. Journalists who work for The Journal Media have the responsibility to promote their stories through tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram posts. 'The reason we do that is because The Journal Media wants to have control over the pieces going out' said Ms. Daly.

Ms. Daly also continued to say, no other member of staff knows the 'story better than they do'. The journalists are in the 'best place' to put out the story to its readers on social media and explain why they should read that article and why it matters.

The Journal Media doesn't want their readers to just click to their stories through social media, they want them to read directly from their website which allows them to read through all the stories. Ms. Daly called the process of connecting readers to their online news website through social media post a 'one hit wonder' which is readers coming to their website for just that story and leaving after reading.

In conclusion the birth of online news media and its popularity is connected to the fact that newspaper media owners saw a shift in the way news is consumed by the younger generation and decided to provide a platform for them to access to information. The creation of the online news media had reduced advertising revenue going into the newspaper industry causing loss of jobs and creating pay cuts. It has also made journalism cheap as information can be gotten anywhere online.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Conclusion**

The invention of internet has brought about significant changes to the media industry. It has encouraged all media platforms to have a social media account and an online presence. The newspaper media is not left behind during this development as they are now having an online presence to attract the younger generation (which is the majority of the population in Ireland) and to make money online. Although, most of the newspaper media that created an online news website have yet to make significant revenue through their online platforms. This study looks at how the internet has influenced the newspaper media to have an online presence which has affected its production.

In the course of analyzing and presenting information for this study lots of conclusions were drawn as the media experts shed more light on the situations in their organizations. From the analysis it could be deduced that the creation of online news media has given room to gossip, fake news, unserious journalism as opposed to serious long-form journalism that could impact the lives of people and create discussion for the development of the country.

Local newspapers are suffering today because the national papers have set agendas for what is supposed to be news. If customers do not see the 'standard' the national papers have set in their local paper, they may not want to pick them up. That is why local newspapers are trying hard to redefine what should be in the content of a newspaper by creating unique content. Although, great and unique content doesn't just make a newspaper sell, a great cover page also goes a long way in attracting the consumer at the point of sale, which encourages them to pick it up.

With the immense pressure journalists and media organizations are facing to get traffic to their products, some of them have devised a means called 'clickbait'. This is when a publication, either a print or online publication uses a very catchy headline to attract consumers to click on the story just to drive traffic to their website. The headline may have been exaggerated to the extent that the content of the story may have no relation to the headline at all or be partially related.

People of great importance in the society 'serious minded people' see online news media as unserious as lots of fake news has been generated in online news media content due to social media and citizen journalism. They would rather pick up a newspaper and get business or political news from them. This is one of the reasons why newspapers and magazines still produce their print copy today and also have an online presence, so as to have diverse audiences.

Print media is not only important to the serious-minded people it's very important to journalists, as it gives them a sense of joy and pride in the work they do. Having a by-line underneath the headline gives pride and a sense of accomplishment to the writers. It puts journalists in a position of authority who know what they are talking about.

The newspaper media that will be mostly affected in the long run or stop production, are those that sell print copies of newspaper to generate revenue as the sales of newspapers drop daily. The arrival of corona virus, the sales of newspapers and magazines reduced drastically, thus limiting funds coming in to the organization. Stalls, stores and coffee shops where the papers are picked up are currently closed. The pandemic made most print media stop production for the last few months.

The organizations that generate income through the sales of advertising revenue are also having big problems. As businesses they would normally advertise for are closed and not making money, it makes them loose advertising revenue. The loss of sales and advertising revenue has shut some organization down, made jobs redundant, created pay cuts, and affected productivity of journalists.

One of the reasons why local newspapers are losing adverts is that businesses now want to know how many people their advertising reached. They want algorithms and numbers of people who saw their advertising, thereby going on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to advertise. The number of people who actually read the newspaper that a publication produces can be known, as there are different skills used by top organizations in figuring out the total number of readers through the circulation processes. The probability of a consumer reading every piece of information in a paper is zero to none. The chances of them reading the advert is also very slim. That is one of the reasons why they are losing advert revenue to social media. With this happening over the years, the price of advertising space

decreased drastically. The amount of money newspapers charged 10-15 years ago is relatively small to what they charge now.

There is also a probability that newspaper media may find a way to make money online through social media. Someone found a way for people to start using paywalls, someone else may also find a way for newspaper media to make profit through social media. The statement above may not be feasible because social media platforms are forcing news publications to insert their story within the social media post instead of embedding the link to their website to promote the growth of their company and make revenue. Instagram is an example of a social media platform that does not allow its user to embed links to an external page. Instagram only allows putting the link in the bio. The app does not have the properties that allow information posted on the story or regular post to be accompanied by links. Although, a few years back Facebook came forward to promise that they will pay news organization for information they use on their app. Nothing regarding this has been done up until this date. I guess it's because they realized that they will lose lots of money if they do that.

The web 2.0 and citizen journalism have changed the world of journalism. The consumer has become the generator and disseminator of information with the help of the internet. This created the platform for fake information and opinion-based publication which people of the younger generation think is the definition of news.

Social media has a good influence on journalism. It has connected journalism all around the world and informs us of things happening around. Without the help of social media, the racism going on in America wouldn't have been known by people around the world, the crisis going on in Yemen wouldn't also have been known, even the decline of newspaper media around the world wouldn't have been known. Social media has its perks and also its disadvantages.

For newspaper to still stay relevant in this digital era they must make extra effort to create unique and interesting products that are not boring or unimportant. Customers are always loyal to a product that gives them 100% satisfaction, and that satisfaction is giving them information from a human angle that is unique, which they won't find anywhere else.

Media organisations supporting one another is another way for the print media to stay relevant in this era, but the chances of that happening are low as some of the newspaper

organization are in the race to remain relevant in the society. Reposting a wonderful story that another media company produced and giving a shout out goes a long way in helping a publication or online news media gain customers and sustaining itself. That is hardly done because media organizations feel their customers will be taken away. What they forget is that if they create a wonderful content their customers will always come back no matter what.

When a piece of information is posted on a news website lots of people have opinions about that piece of information. Their opinion can be easily posted under the story in the comment section, which can make the reader uncomfortable or change how they think. The newspaper media is a bit different as it doesn't give room for direct feedback on a piece of information. The newspaper media in the future may be the go-to-media for an individual who wants to read a piece of information without having anyone's opinion and having deep reflection on the topic.

The bottom line is newspaper media is not going anywhere for now, at least in the next 10 to 20 years. National newspapers may turn into a weekly publication while the local ones may be produced monthly or fortnightly with their online news medium running daily. Newspaper may also turn into a hobby just like books did or turn into what people read during their leisure activities to relax and unwind during and after the week.

### **6.1 Recommendations for further study**

Since this study is carried out in Ireland, further studies can be done on the growth of online news media and its effect on the newspaper industry in other countries. Or possibly the effect of social media on the newspaper media or any of the other traditional media. Other research may be done by extending the interviews to different counties and having more interviewees. Research can be done on the effect of the growth of the internet in Ireland and its effect on the traditional media (either radio or television).

Based on the findings and conclusions of research, the study was unable to investigate the various statistical trends on how the growth of online news media has affected the newspaper industry. Research has shown that there is no reliable research in the Irish context, hence more sufficient study should be conducted.

The manner at which online news media and newspaper media have been able to assist during the time of crisis (COVID-19) should be examined by other researchers.

The appointment of Ireland's first ever Minister for Media is a big step taken by the Irish to promote the growth of media in Ireland. In some countries Google and Facebook are forced to make contributions to media companies. The study recommends that a comparative analysis should be carried out on the positive impact of social media towards media development (either online, print or broadcast).

In order to help the new minister in policy making the following research could be carried out, to better understand the Irish media: what percentage of news in the Irish media is contributed by Google and Facebook, how can the media sector be improved, what state the pre-existing media (newspaper, radio and television) is and how Google and Facebook can give back to the Irish publishers.

Also, further research should be conducted through the aid of quantitative survey method to ascertain the perception of media workers and the public's perception in identifying the various factors that contribute towards the development of media companies.

## APPENDIX

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# Information Sheet

Title of Research Study:

“The Growth of Online news Media in Ireland and Its Effect on the Newspaper industry”

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear interviewee,

You are invited to take part in a research study to examine how the growth of online news media in Ireland, and how it has affected the newspaper industry. I would like to interview about your experiences of working in the media industry and what significant changes you have seen over time and how this has affected the productivity at the workplace. If you are a newspaper company owner, how those changes have affected your company and productivity. This research is part of a master's Thesis in Journalism and Media Communications for Griffith College, Dublin.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

The purpose of this study is to know; to what extent the growth of the online news media has affected the newspaper media in Ireland.

You have been chosen, because of your experience in working in the media at a time of great technological change/ you own a newspaper industry in Ireland. If you choose to take part, the interview will last approximately 20 minutes and will be arranged to a time that suit you.

Information from the interview will be used to quantify the extent to which the online news media has affected the newspaper industry in Ireland and what the newspaper media has to go through to keep afloat.

You are free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Information received will be treated with utmost respect and save securely in a password protected file.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information

Yours sincerely,

[STUDENT'S NAME]: Aishat Olabimpe Ibrahim

[STUDENTS MOBILE NUMBER]: 0899870244

[STUDENT'S EMAIL ADDRESS]: [aishatolabimpe@gamil.com](mailto:aishatolabimpe@gamil.com)

## Consent Forms

Two of the interviewees do not have access to a printer because they are working remotely.

### Consent Form

Researcher: [Aishat Olabimpe Ibrahim]

- The aim of this study is to know to what extent the online news media has affected the newspaper industry.
- You will be asked 11 questions about working as a journalist either in a newspaper media or in online news media or owner of an online news media/newspaper organisation The interview should last around 20 minutes.
- This research will be of benefit as it draws on the experience of journalists /owners of online news media who are working at a time of change in the media industry. This research provides an opportunity to know what business owners in the industry have to go through to keep the organization afloat.
- Interviewees cannot be kept anonymous, because your occupation and professionalism are the main reason you were chosen to help with this dissertation. The dissertation is not one, that will in anyway put your life/career in danger at any point. The information needed is basically what you have experienced or seen during the years of working in the media.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.
- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:
  - Aishat Olabimpe Ibrahim : aishatolabimpe@gmail.com (researcher)
  - Ellie O'Byrne: ellie.obyrne@griffith.ie (research supervisor)
- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

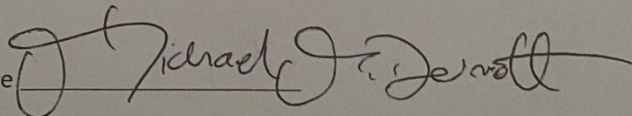
Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_Aishat Ibrahim\_\_\_\_

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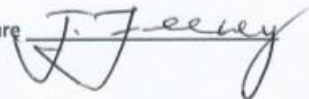


30.06.20



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Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Sam Tranum \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Aishat Ibrahim \_\_\_\_\_

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Participant Signature \_\_Susan Daly\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_Aishat Ibrahim\_\_

## Interview questions

Below are the questions asked during the interviews

1. Please can you introduce yourself? How long have you been working in the media organization/owned it?
2. Where is your organization located?
3. How much does the publication cost? / do you use paywall, and how much does it cost?
4. What area does your organization cover?
5. How many staff does the organization have?
6. What is the structure of your desk? Do you have a separate online and print editor as a traditional newspaper does?
7. Is the decline of print newspaper circulation a loss to Irish society in your opinion?
8. As a publication who has both a print and online presence has competition affected your operations in any way?
9. How many % of advertising revenue has the organization lost? How has it affected staff cuts? /how many staff have you had to lay off?
10. What do you think about the situation facing the newspaper media today? Will the newspaper ever recover?
11. What ways do you think the newspaper media can survive in this digital era?
12. How has the growth of online media affected journalist working practices?
13. How has coronavirus impacted the organization?
14. Do you have staffs specifically for the social media role?
15. How does the company generate income?